

Public Notice

In reply refer to:

Issuance Date:

Public Notice No. 200200258

June 27, 2004

Stream:

Expiration Date:

Mudlick Fork

July 27, 2004

Address comments to:

US Army Corps of Engineers, Huntington District

502 Eighth Street ATTN: CELRH-F

Huntington, West Virginia 25701-2070

PUBLIC NOTICE

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN: The following application has been submitted for a Department of the Army Permit under the provisions of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act. This notice serves as the Corps of Engineers' request to the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection to act on Section 401 Water Quality Certification for the following application.

APPLICANT:

Elk Run Coal Company

Post Office Box 497

Sylvester, West Virginia 25193

LOCATION: The proposed project is located in unnamed tributaries of Mudlick Fork, Laurel Creek and Sandlick Creek and in main Sandlick Creek, approximately 3.2 miles east of Williams Mountain, in Boone County, West Virginia as depicted on **Drawings 1, 2** and **3**. Mudlick Fork and Sandlick Creek flow into Laurel Creek of Big Coal River, a navigable water of the U.S.

material into 26,437 linear feet or 2.646 acres of jurisdictional streams in conjunction with the Black Castle Contour Surface Mine. The proposal would involve the construction of 11 valley fills and 8 associated sediment ponds as depicted on **Drawings 3 and 4 through 11**. Nine of the proposed valley fills (No. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10) would be expansions of existing valley fills. All of the proposed valley fills would drain watersheds of less than 250 acres, ranging from 41.51 to 217.36 as detailed on **Table A** of this public notice. The construction of the proposed valley fills would result in the discharge of fill material into approximately 16,414 linear feet or 1.637 acres of waters of the U.S. Approximately 3,820 linear feet or 0.583 acres of waters of the U.S. would be temporarily impacted by the construction of the proposed sediment ponds. The proposed operation would also involve mining through streams to remove the underlying coal reserves in the unnamed tributaries of Laurel Creek, Sandlick Creek, George Branch, and Mudlick Fork. This proposed activity would temporarily impact approximately 6,203 linear feet or 0.426 acre of waters of the U.S. **Table A** details the proposed mining activities and corresponding stream locations and impacts and affected drainage areas as mentioned above.

The proposed operation would generate approximately 43 million cubic yards of material of which approximately 2.5 million cubic yards (6%) would be placed in the proposed valley fills. The remaining approximate 40.5 million cubic yards (94%) would be placed on the contour to backfill and eliminate a highwall as well as to comply with the approximate original contour (AOC) model of March 1999. **Table B** (attached) details the individual volumes of spoil material to be placed within the Corps' regulatory jurisdiction in conjunction with each proposed valley fill.

The West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection (WVDEP) approved the applicant's Surface Mining Permit application (S-5023-00) on January 14, 2003 pursuant to the Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977.

The mineral removal area on the permit is to be mined via multiple cut contour and highwall/augering mining methods in the Coalburg and Buffalo Creek coal seams using dozers, loaders, drilling and blasting. Overburden haulers may also be utilized to transport the overburden to its final regrade location. Approximately 664.86 acres of surface area would be disturbed by the proposed operation. Mining and reclamation activities would take place over the course of six phases during a six year period.

Phase I: Mining of the Buffalo Creek seam would occur initially in the area of Valley Fill 7 and progress in a northerly and southerly direction along the contour. Excess spoil, non-toxic and durable material only, would be placed in Valley Fill 7. Highwall mining would be conducted in the Buffalo Creek seam to a maximum penetration of 1100'. Contour cuts along the Coalburg seam, with highwall mining, would follow completion of the Buffalo Creek seam mining. Mining would progress along the contour in this manner through Valley Fills 6 and 8. A total of 198.21 acres would be disturbed with no acres reclaimed during this initial phase. The total disturbed unreclaimed acres would be 198.21, which is 29.81% of the total permit area. A total of 24.81 acres represents the ancillary facilities during this phase.

Phase II: Contour cuts and highwall mining on both the Coalburg and Buffalo Creek seams would continue around Valley Fill 3, 4 and 5. The disturbance during this phase would be 100.10 acres and 114.79 acres would be reclaimed, leaving 183.52 acres of unreclaimed area. The unreclaimed acres represent 27.60% of the total permit area. An additional 11.84 acres of ancillary facilities are added during this phase. Reclamation would be complete in the areas of Valley Fill 8 and the toe area of Valley Fill 7.

Phase III: Continued contour and highwall mining of both seams would occur during Phase III. The areas around Valley Fill 7 would be complete with mining beginning around Valley Fills 1 and 2. The area around Valley Fill 1 would be accessed via adjacent permits and the construction of haulroad number one. A total of 84.41 acres would be disturbed with 48.37 acres reclaimed. This would leave 26.13% or 173.71 acres unreclaimed at the end of Phase III. The ancillary facility acreage would be an additional 11.65 acres during this phase.

<u>Phase IV</u>: Continued contour and highwall mining of both seams would occur during Phase IV. The areas around Valley Fills 3, 4, 5 and 6 would be complete with mining beginning around Valley Fill 9 and 10. The area around Valley Fill 9 and 10 would be accessed via adjacent permits and the construction of haulroad number six. A total of 92.27 acres would be disturbed with 135.15 acres reclaimed. This would leave 26.57% or 176.68 acres unreclaimed at the end of Phase IV. The ancillary facility acreage would be an additional 18.93 acres during Phase IV.

<u>Phase V</u>: Contour cuts and highwall mining on both the Coalburg and Buffalo Creek seams would continue around Valley Fill 11. The disturbance during this phase would be 109.40 acres and 94.09 acres would be reclaimed, leaving 191.99 acres of unreclaimed area. The unreclaimed acres represent 28.88% of the total permit area. An additional 13.24 acres of ancillary facilities would be added during this phase. Reclamation would be complete in the areas of Valley Fills 1 and 2.

<u>Phase VI</u>: All mining and reclamation would be completed during Phase VI with 0.00 acres disturbed and 191.99 acres reclaimed. All ancillary facilities would have been constructed.

According to the applicant, the purpose of the project is to construct valley fills to dispose of excess overburden spoil generated by surface mining operations into waters of the United States in order to achieve optimal recovery of available coal reserves within the project area and to provide the mandatory sediment control. Plans (**Drawings 1 through 11**) of the proposed work are attached to this notice.

MITIGATION PLAN: The applicant has submitted a compensatory mitigation plan (CMP) to compensate for permanent and temporary impacts to waters of the U.S. regulated by the Department of the Army, Corps of Engineers. To compensate for permanent impacts to waters of the U.S., the applicant proposes to mitigate on-site through in-kind restoration, enhancement and/or creation of aquatic resources. Approximately 1,115 linear feet of Sediment Ditch 11/Perimeter Ditch 11E and 1,163 linear feet of Sediment Ditch 11A/Perimeter Ditch 11D located on Valley Fill 11 would be utilized as replacement stream channels. In addition, the applicant proposes stream enhancement/restoration activities in George Branch and unnamed tributaries of Laurel Creek and main Laurel Creek as detailed in the table below.

MITIGATION SITE	MITIGATION LENGTH
	(LINEAR FEET)
Laurel Creek	23,188'
Unnamed Tributary of Laurel Creek	546'
Unnamed Tributary of Laurel Creek	620'
Unnamed Tributary of Laurel Creek	3212'
George Branch	3050'

Currently, the water quality of the streams to be impacted by the proposed valley fills is extremely poor and is presently being chemically treated to meet NPDES effluent limitations. An extensive water-sampling project has been ongoing for approximately seven years by Working On People's Environmental Concerns (WOPEC) to determine the impact of mining the Buffalo Creek seam and the improvement in water quality.

According to the CMP, acid mine drainage is currently flowing through existing valley fills and, as a result, has improved considerably due to the neutralization potential of the overburden material from the Buffalo Creek coal seam. The improved water quality as a result of the current mining of the Buffalo Creek coal seam and the current fill construction is the major reason for permitting the subject operation pursuant to Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act of 1977. The mitigation plan indicates nine of the proposed valley fills are expected to passively treat acid mine drainage and overall water quality due to the neutralization potential of the coal seam overburden. This proposed mitigation would result in the restoration/enhancement of approximately 30,616 linear feet of intermittent and perennial stream channels and the creation of 2,278 linear feet of intermittent stream channels. Existing native vegetation would be retained to the extent feasible for use in Phases I and II of the mitigation plan. Rosgen natural stream techniques would be used in the design of the mitigation sites.

To compensate for temporary impacts, the applicant proposes to perform stream channel restoration in the temporarily disturbed segments of the mined through stream channels and sediment pond areas and associated drainage corridors. Approximately 11,000 linear feet of intermittent and ephemeral stream channels would be restored to their pre-mining conditions. The stream channels would consist of primary and secondary channels. The primary channel would be created using soil that has been compacted while the secondary channel would be created of loose dumped soil. This is expected to allow for minimal water loss from the stream channels and to allow vegetation to more easily root in the loose dumped secondary channel layer. In order to generate a volume for stream bank depths of the primary channel, the channel designs would be based on a 2-year 24-hour precipitation event. The primary stream channels would be lined with cobble-sized rock (2.5-10 inches) while the secondary channel would be lined with boulder size stones (greater than 10 inches). Rosgen natural stream techniques would be used in the design of the restoration sites. Reestablishment of vegetation in riparian areas would comply with the guidelines and recommendations outlined in the NRCS CPS Code 342 for the "Establishment of Vegetation."

WATER QUALITY CERTIFICATION: A Section 401 Water Quality Certification is required for this project. It is the applicant's responsibility to obtain certification from the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection.

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES: The National Register of Historic Places has been consulted and it has been determined there are no properties currently listed on the register that are in the area affected by the project. A copy of this public notice will be sent to the State Historic Preservation Office for their review. Comments concerning archeological sensitivity of a project area should be based upon collected data.

ENDANGERED/THREATENED SPECIES REVIEW: Mist net surveys were conducted July 14-23, 2003. A total of eight sites were surveyed. An Indiana bat was captured on the subject project area during survey efforts. The Indiana bat captured was a post-lactating female captured at MS-8 (Net B) on 23 July 2003. The capture site was located in the Sandlick Creek drainage. A total of 57 bats of 7 species were captured during the 32 net nights of effort for the proposed mine and amendment sites. Mist netting activities at MS-4 yielded the most bats with 15 bats representing 4 species. MS-2 had the highest species diversity with five bats being captured during the two nights of survey effort.

Subsequent radio tracking of the Indiana bat revealed a roost tree in the proposed project area. The loss of this habitat in the "Action Area" will result in the elimination of maternity habitat. The Huntington District has consulted the most recently available information and has determined the project is likely to adversely affect the Indiana bat.

This public notice serves as a request to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for any additional information they may have on whether any listed or proposed to be listed endangered or threatened species may be present in the area which would be affected by the activity, pursuant to Section 7(c) of the Endangered Species Act of 1972 (as amended).

PUBLIC INTEREST REVIEW AND COMMENT: Any person who has an interest that may be adversely affected by the issuance of a permit may request a public hearing. The request must be submitted in writing to the District Engineer on or before the expiration date of this notice and must clearly set forth the interest which may be adversely affected and the manner in which the interest may be adversely affected by the activity.

Interested parties are invited to state any objections they may have to the proposed work. The decision whether to issue a permit will be based on an evaluation of the probable impact including cumulative impacts of the proposed activity on the public interest. That decision will reflect the national concern for both protection and utilization of important resources. The benefit that reasonably may be expected to accrue from the proposal must be balanced against its reasonably foreseeable detriments. All factors that may be relevant to the proposal will be considered including the cumulative effects thereof; of those are conservation, economics, aesthetics, general environmental concerns, wetlands, historic properties, fish and wildlife values, flood hazards, floodplain values, land use, navigation, shoreline erosion and accretion, recreation, water supply and conservation, water quality, energy needs, safety, food and fiber production, mineral needs, considerations of property ownership and, in general, the needs and welfare of the people. In addition, the evaluation of the impact of the activity on the public interest will include application of the guidelines promulgated by the Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency, under the authority of Section 404(b) of the Clean Water Act. Written statements on these factors received in this office on or before the expiration date of this public notice will become a part of the record and will be considered in the final determination. A permit will be granted unless its issuance is found to be contrary to the public interest.

The Corps of Engineers is soliciting comments from the public; Federal, state, and local agencies and officials; Indian Tribes; and other interested parties in order to consider and evaluate the impacts of this proposed activity. Any comments received will be considered by the Corps of Engineers to determine whether to issue, modify, condition or deny a permit for this proposal. To make this decision, comments are used to assess impacts on endangered species, historic properties, water quality, general environmental effects, and the other public interest factors listed above. Comments are used in the preparation of an Environmental Assessment and/or an Environmental Impact Statement pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act. Comments are also used to determine the need for a public hearing and to determine the overall public interest of the proposed activity.

If you have any questions concerning this public notice, please call Mrs. Teresa Spagna of the South Regulatory Section at 304-399-5710.

Junger Mullins, Chief Regulatory Branch

(W)

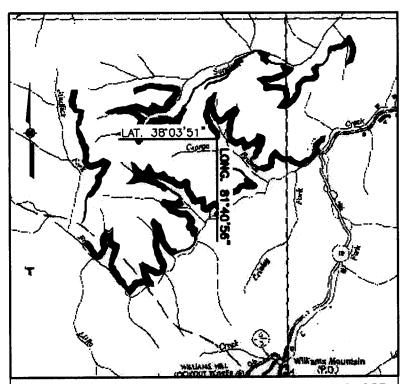
Table A

Watershed	Acreage		56.5 acres		146.76 acres					56.78 acres		130.3 acres		41.51 acres				145.6 acres						180.1 acres					
Impact	Type		Permanent	Temporary	Permanent	Permanent	Permanent	Temporary	Temporary	Permanent	Temporary	Permanent	Temporary	Permanent	Permanent	Permanent	Temporary	Permanent	Permanent	Temporary	Temporary	Temporary	Temporary	Permanent	Permanent	Temporary	Temporary	Temporary	Temporary
Stream	Type		Intermittent	Intermittent	Intermittent	Ephemeral	Ephemeral	Intermittent	Ephemeral	Ephemeral	Ephemeral	Ephemeral	Ephemeral	Intermittent	Ephemeral	Ephemeral	Ephemeral	Ephemeral	Ephemeral	Intermittent	Ephemeral	Ephemeral	Ephemeral	Intermittent	Ephemeral	Intermittent	Intermittent	Ephemeral	Ephemeral
Extent of	Impacts	(linear feet/acres)	850/0.073	245/0.025	340/.062	400/0.028	1125/0.111	420/0.057	321/0.023	970/0/028	23/0.001	1481/0.166	374/0.044	400/0.036	380/0.017	100/0.008	229/0.008	1333/.157	800/0.074	620/0.119	100/0/010	400/0.022	240/0.020	1971/0.226	1156/0.093	9200/009	600/0.040	135/0.007	24/0.001
Location			Unnamed Tributary of Mudlick Fork	Unnamed Tributary of Mudlick Fork	Unnamed Tributary of Laurel Creek	Unnamed Tributary of Laurel Creek (Right Fork)	Unnamed Tributary of Laurel Creek	Unnamed Tributary of Laurel Creek	Unnamed Tributary of Laurel Creek	Unnamed Tributary of Laurel Creek	Unnamed Tributary of Laurel Creek	Unnamed Tributary of Laurel Creek	Unnamed Tributary of Laurel Creek	Unnamed Tributary of Laurel Creek	Unnamed Tributary of Laurel Creek	Unnamed Tributary of Laurel Creek	Unnamed Tributary of Laurel Creek	Unnamed Tributary of Laruel Creek	Unnamed Tributary of Laruel Creek	Unnamed Tributary of Laurel Creek	Unnamed Tributary of Laurel Creek	Unnamed Tributary of Laurel Creek	Unnamed Tributary of Laurel Creek	Unnamed Tributary of Georges Branch	Unnamed Tributary of Georges Branch	Unnamed Tributary of Georges Branch	Unnamed Tributary of Georges Branch	Unnamed Tributary of Georges Branch	Unnamed Tributary of Georges Branch
Proposed Mining Activity			Valley Fill No.1	Sediment Control Pond No.1	Valley Fill No.2	Valley Fill No.2	Valley Fill No.2	Sediment Control Pond No.2	Mined Through Stream (Right Drain)	Valley Fill No. 3	Mined Through Stream	Valley Fill No. 4	Sediment Control Pond No.4	Valley Fill No. 5	Valley Fill No. 5	Valley Fill No. 5	Mined Through Stream	Valley Fill No. 6	Valley Fill No. 6	Sediment Control Pond No.6	Mined Through Stream	Mined Through Stream (Right Drain at 8+30)	Mined Through Stream (Right Drain at	Valley Fill No. 7	Valley Fill No. 7 (Right Drain at 8+60)	Sediment Control Pond No.7	Mined Through Stream	Mined Through Stream	Mined Through Stream (Right Drain at

(09+8					
Valley Fill No. 8	Unnamed Tributary of Georges Branch	960.0/676	Ephemeral	Permanent	44.62 acres
Valley Fill No. 8 (Left Drain at 12+35)	Unnamed Tributary of Georges Branch	332/0.028	Ephemeral	Permanent	
Sediment Control Pond No. 8	Unnamed Tributary of Georges Branch	350/0.055	Ephemeral	Temporary	
Mined Through Stream (Left Drain at			,		
12+35)	Unnamed Tributary of Georges Branch	68/0.003	Ephemeral	Temporary	
Valley Fill No. 9	Unnamed Tributary of Sandlick Creek	946/0.058	Ephemeral	Permanent	60.37 acres
Sediment Control Pond No.9	Unnamed Tributary of Sandlick Creek	200/0.027	Ephemeral	Temporary	
Mined Through Stream	Unnamed Tributary of Sandlick Creek	50/0.005	Ephemeral	Temporary	
Sediment Control Pond No.9	Unnamed Tributary of Sandlick Creek	321/0.048	Ephemeral	Temporary	
Valley Fill No.10	Unnamed Tributary of Sandlick Creek	848/0.039	Ephemeral	Permanent	73.37 acres
Sediment Control Pond No.9	Unnamed Tributaroy of Sandlick Creek	230/0.033	Ephemeral	Temporary	
Valley Fill No. 11	Unnamed Tributary of Sandlick Creek	436/0.100	Intermittent	Permanent	217.36 acres
Valley Fill No. 11 (Right Fork)	Unnamed Tributary of Sandlick Creek	20.0/197	Intermittent	Permanent	
Valley Fill No 11(Left Fork)	Unnamed Tributary of Sandlick Creek	800/0/008	Intermittent	Permanent	
Mined Through Stream (Right Fork)	Unnamed Tributary of Sandlick Creek	1790/0.133	Intermittent	Temporary	
Mined Through Stream (Left Fork)	Unnamed Tributary of Sandlick Creek	800/0.073	Intermittent	Temporary	
Mined Through Stream (Left Fork)	Unnamed Tributary of Sandlick Creek	100/0.002	Ephemeral	Temporary	
Mined Through (On Left Fork at 11+30)	Unnamed Tributary of Sandlick Creek	1323/0.078	Intermittent	Temporary	
Sediment Control Pond No. 11	Unnamed Tributary of Sandlick Creek	430/0.099	Intermittent	Temporary	
		16,414′/1.637			
Total (Valley Fills-Per	ermanent Impacts)	acres			
		6,203'/0.426			
Total (Mined Through Strea	eam-Temporary Impacts)	acre			
		3,820′/0.583			
Total (Sediment Ponds-Temporary Impacts)	-Temporary Impacts)	acre			
		26,437'/2.646			
Total (Permanent and Temporary Impacts)	Temporary Impacts)	acres			

Table B

Vol. Tech.)	12315	37037	11991	24436	9490	35764	50407	19167	9093	9209	45575
Valley Fill Identification	1	2	3	4	5	9	7	&	6	10	11



PERMIT NO. S-5023-00

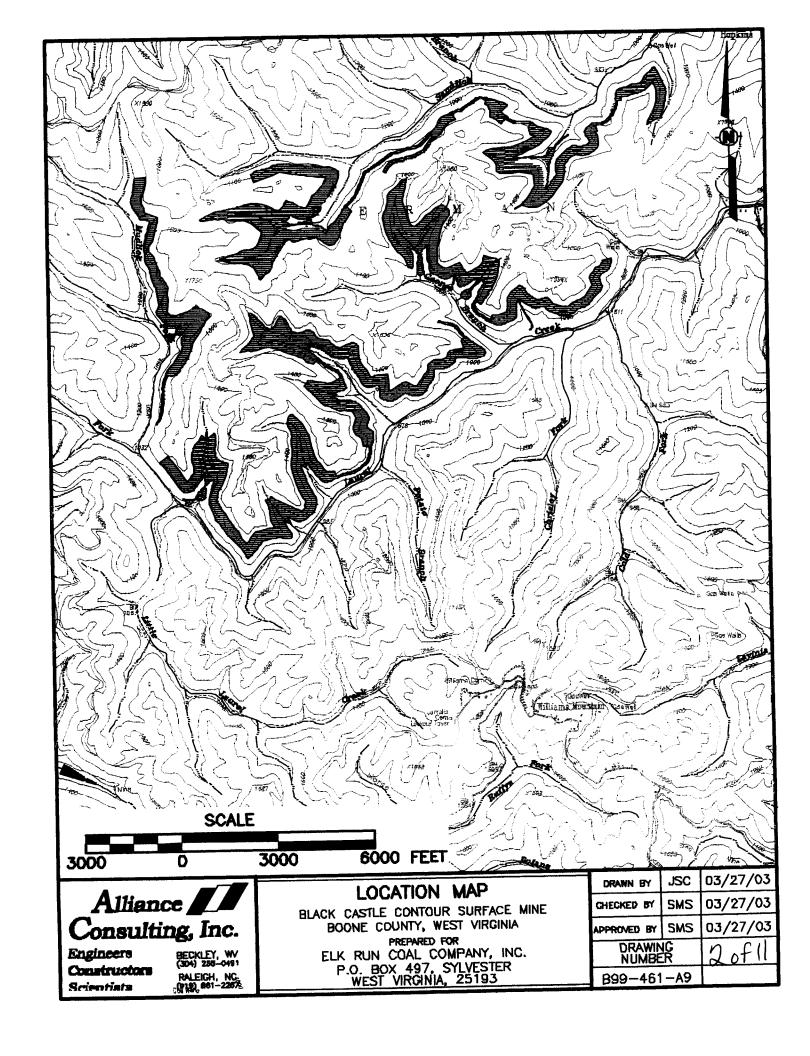
NPDES NO. W/0094668

LOCATION MAP — GENERAL HIGHWAYS MAP WEST VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HIGHWAYS SHERMAN DISTRICT OF BOONE COUNTY, WV WILLIAMS MOUNTAIN QUADRANGLE.

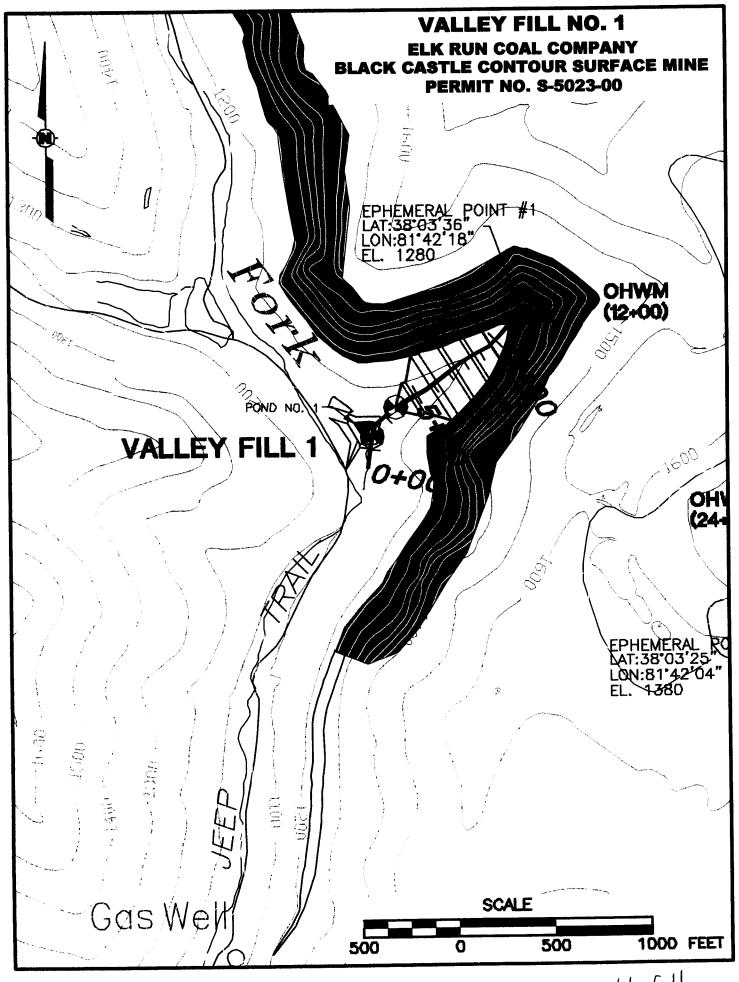
RECEIVING STREAMS: MUDLICK FORK, AN UNNAMED TRIBUTARY OF MUDLICK FORK, LAUREL CREEK, AN UNNAMED TRIBUTARY OF LAUREL CREEK, GEORGE BRANCH, AN UNNAMED TRIBUTARY OF GEORGE BRANCH AND SANDLICK CREEK AND AN UNNAMED TRIBUTARY OF SANDLICK CREEK ALL OF BIG COAL RIVER OF COAL RIVER.

SCALE : 1" = 1 MILE

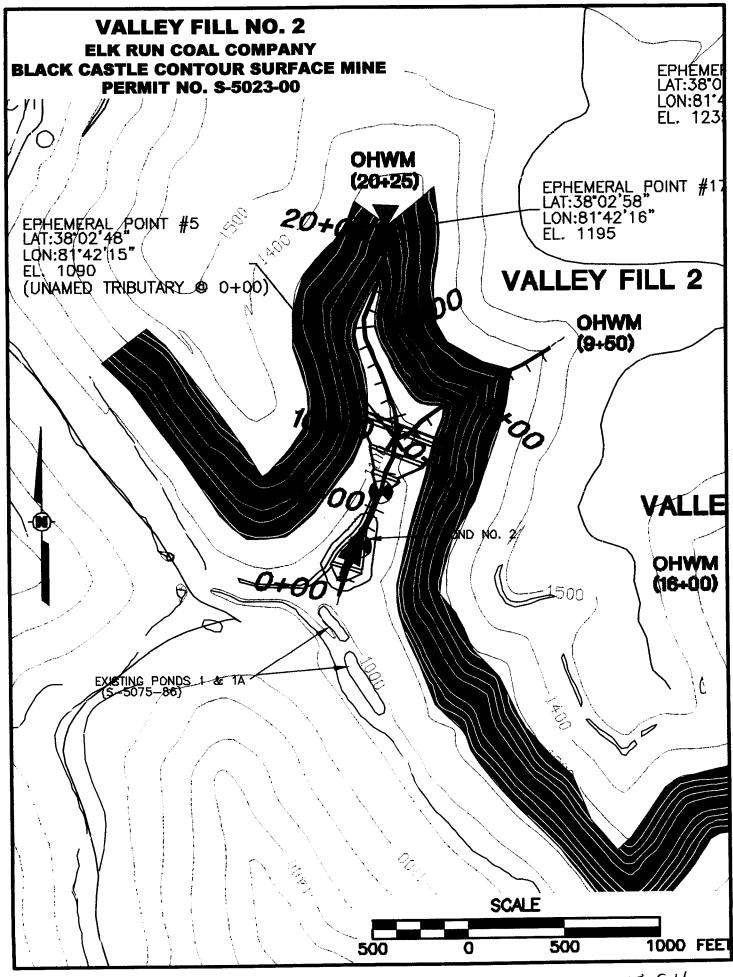
BLACK CASTLE CONTOUR SURFACE MINE

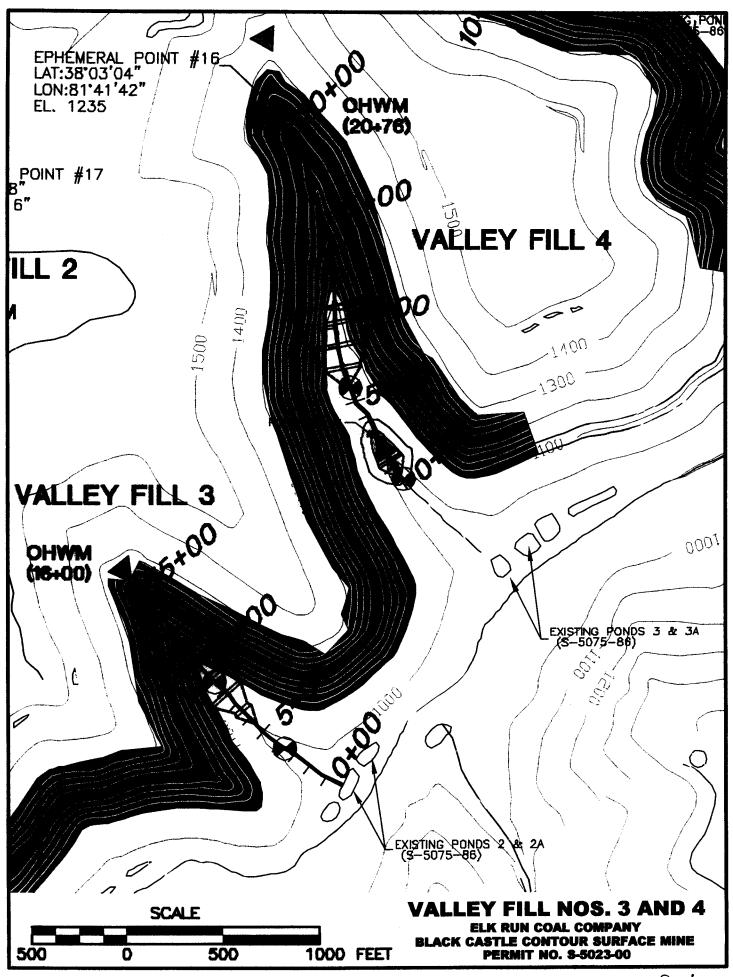






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